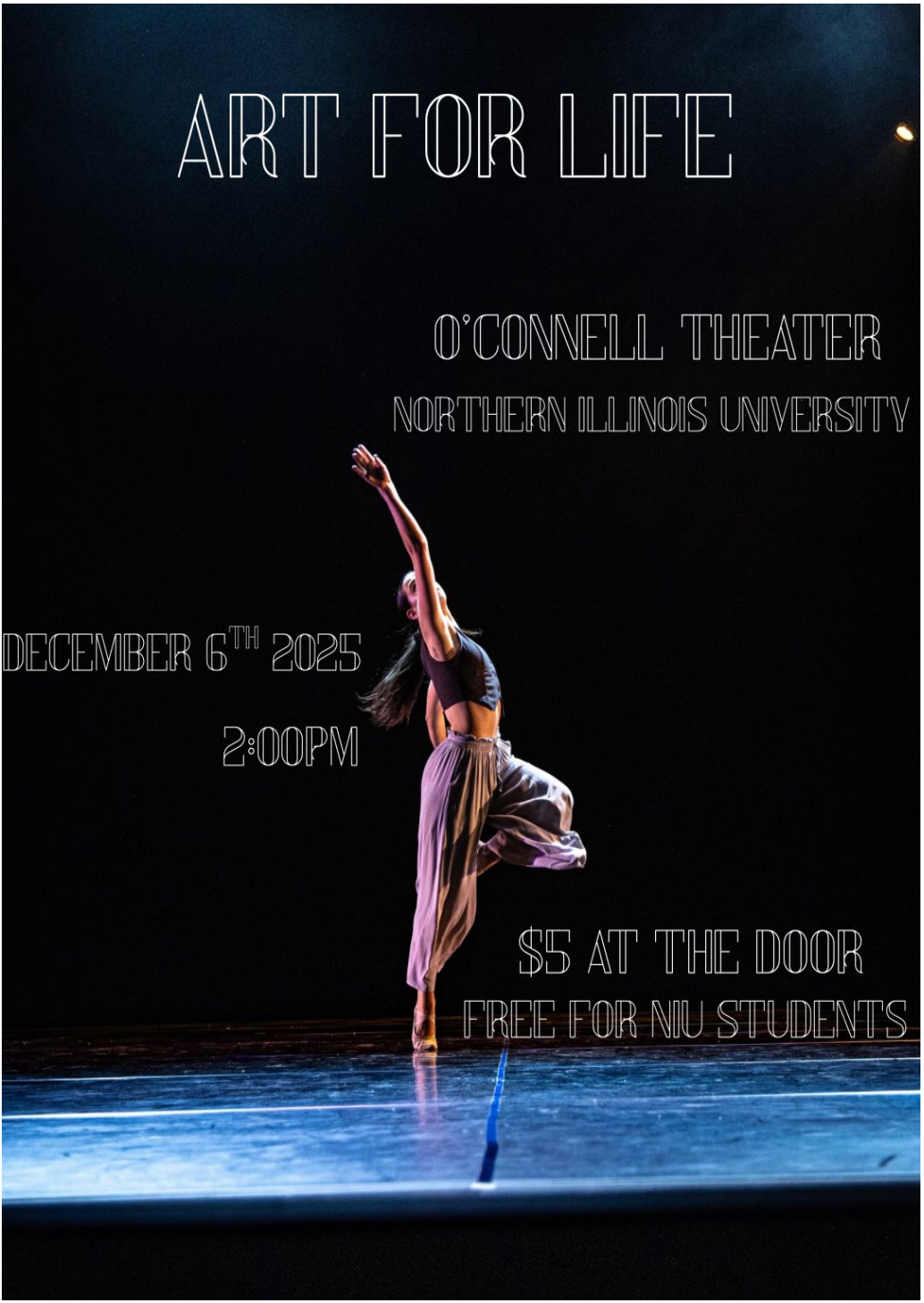
# NORTHERN DANCE THEATRE



# Director's Note

Thank you for joining us this afternoon for Art for Life. This is a fully student produced showcase that features our students both as dancers and choreographers. We appreciate your support and hope you enjoy the show!

Concert Directors: Talia Sigismondi & Clara Coran

Stage Manager: Maggie Kanapilly

Faculty Advisors: Rich Grund, Brandon Wardell

Lighting Assistants: Emily Christianson, Mike Kozel, Max Garcia, Reece Deidrick, Kateri Pfeiffer, and Gemma Baines

## “Tours and Allegro”

Choreographer: Teresa Dingman

Dancers: Catherine Cummings & Talia Sigismondi

Music: “10 Preludes, Op. 23: No. 5 in G Minor: Alla Marcia” Composed by Sergei Rachmaninoff, played by Eldar Nebolsin

## “Negro Soledad”

Choreographer: Kendall Woodberry

Dancer: Chloe Franklin

Music: Negro Soledad by Belafonte Sensacional

Note: please enjoy this piece about what solitude can feel like sometimes.

## “Dormant <-> Dynamic”

Choreographer: Ash Lehning

Dancers: Chamayze Hall, Aubrey McGee, Naija Sherwood

Music: Maniac by Stray Kids

## “Vive u Vuela”

Choreographer: Ivan Flores

Dancers: Alice Duncan

Music: Pajarito Colibri by Natalia Lafourcade

Note: What does it mean to be part of this creation we call life while comparing that to the short and sometimes fragile life span of a bird? - The choreography was inspired in the meaning of the human experience and as a homage for those that have lost the fight against AIDS.

(www.cdc.gov) World AIDS Day (December 1) is a day of solidarity for people around the world who are affected by HIV and for voices to unite by sharing experiences, remembering those lost, and standing together in the fight against HIV.

## “Dews & Doughn'ts”

Choreographer: Thomas Readling

Dancers: Irismichelle Martinez-Garcia, Dion Morris, Kai White

Music: 20180927 by Mac DeMarco and Alright by Men I Trust

## “Breakin’ Dishes

Choreographer: Francesca Ryan

Dancer: Francesca Ryan

Music: Breakin’ Dishes by Rihanna

## “Sound Storm”

Choreographer: Antonio Houston & Kendall Woodberry

Dancers: Monet Johnson, Vivian Peterson, Talia Sigismondi

Music: Atlas by Laurel Halo, Lucy Railton, James Underwood & 20190622 by Mac DeMarco

## “Please Hear & See & Don't Give Up On Me”

Choreographer: Toby Thomas

Music: Don’t Give Up On Me by Andy Grammer

Dancers: Toby Thomas

Note: To always remember you are Loved & matter always believe in yourself & your Dreams. Don't let no one bring you down & always remember you are always are enough just the way you are. As long as you believe you will achieve your dreams, when you believe you will succeed, (NEVER GIVE UP) Toby. T

## “Power in Femininity”

Choreographer: Dion Morris

Dancers: Ash Lehning, Aubrey McGee, Kendall Woodberry

Music: Run the World (Girls) by Beyonce

- **INTERMISSION** -

( 10 minutes )

## “Light, Dark, & Shadows”

Choreographer: Talia Sigismondi

Dancers: Teresa Dingman, Antonio Houston, Thomas Readling

Music: Candle Flickers (feat Peter Gregson) [Adagio] by Stephan Miccio & Arrival of the Birds by Thieves

Note: Exploring light, dark, shadows, reflection, shapes, & connection.

## “A Very Questionable Sleigh Ride”

Choreographer: Ash Lehning

Dancers: Ash Lehning

Music: Sleigh Ride by Leroy Anderson

Note: This is my third time performing this piece, and the choreography changes each time to best reflect who I am at that time in my life.

## “A Discordant Passage”

Choreographer: Clara Coran

Dancers: Catherine Cummings, Monet Johnson, Sophia Testa

Music: Time for Space by Emancipator

## “ON LOVE: EROS”

Choreographer: Alice Duncan- Abushalback

Dancers: Alice Duncan- Abushalback

Music: In Regards to Love by Taku. Matsushiba

Note: This solo was choreographed with inspiration from the figure-skating program *"In Regards to Love: Eros,"* by Kenji Miyamoto, which was used for rotoscoping in the 2016 Sports Anime *"Yuri!!! on Ice."* Eros is described as a sensual but playful form of love that makes one act on instinct alone, which I hoped to capture in my stage rendition of the program. I chose this piece because it's far out of my comfort zone; and also, because it's fun — and every time that music starts, I can feel it coursing through me. That, in itself, is the *Eros* kind of love.

## “The Face Off”

Choreographer: Francesca Ryan

Dancers: Clara Coran, Thomas Readling, Francesca Ryan

Music: Sound of War by Proffit

## “Ant’s Last Jam”

Choreographer: Antonio Houston

Dancers: Antonio Houston

Music: 20200402 by Mac DeMarco

Note: Just as I came in tapping, I’m leaving tapping. This time around, I think I might talk too.

## “Relative Dissonance”

Choreographer: Ava Martin

Dancers: Teresa Dingman & Chloe Franklin

Music: Drift by Ratatat

Note: This piece is a lense into the awkwardness of sisterhood. I dedicate this piece to my sister Lana Martin.

## “Goin Up”

Choreographer: Alice Duncan- Abushalback

Dancers: Clara Coran, Ivan Flores, Ava Martin

Music: Sound design by Alice: Girl from Petaluma by Cocktail Shakers

Note: Life is a rollercoaster infamous for containing ups and downs, lefts and rights, sometimes even reversals; but nobody ever talks about the awkward parts that make you feel stuck or stagnant: places where you desperately wish for time to speed up — for the painstakingly long moment to end. "Going Up?" is a theatrical representation of the way my mind works through those awkward situations, using an elevator ride with strangers as the prime example. I've taught myself that regarding the tension as a fun, goofy dance number can make it infinitely more bearable — and also hilarious. Feel free to laugh! And I hope that the next time you're in an elevator, you throw everyone present into a dance number of your own.

## “*No dejes que la sociedad determine quién eres*"
## (Don't let society determine who you are)

Choreographer: Stephanie Tenorio Zavala

Dancers: Irismichelle Martinez-Garcia, Vivan Peterson, & Sophia Testa

Music: Mal bicho" by Los Fabulosos Cadillacs and "Party time" by Loco Mía

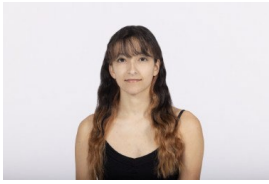
Note: The first section of the piece "Mal bicho" is about how we all suffer different forms of discrimination in society in our everyday lifes based on our appereance, culture, taditions, or on our different points of view that might challenge society's norms. This transitions into "Pary time" that is meant to show that we are not that different from one another and should be able to create meanignful connections and enjoy the short time we have on this earth being kind and supportive to each other.

# Cast and Choreographer Bios

**Clara Coran** (she/her) is in her final year as a B.F.A. dance performance major at Northern Illinois University. Past performance credits include *Fall Dance Concert* (2023), *Spring Dance Concert* (2024), *Paquita* (2024), and *Spring Dance Concert* (2025). Before attending NIU, she trained with Elise Flagg Academy of Dance, Ballet 5:8's Conservatory Program, and Beth Fowler School of Dance. She has also performed as a member of the Embody Dance Company in Geneva, Illinois. This year she participated in Hubbard Street Dance Chicago's EXPLORE summer intensive and co-directed Northern Dance Theater's 2025 Student Choreographic Showcase. She thanks you for coming and hopes that you enjoy the show!

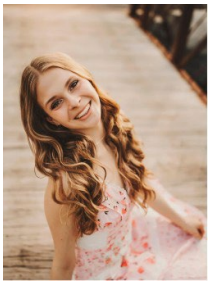
**Catherine Cummings** is a second-year political science major and dance minor from Mankato, Minnesota. She began dance at the age of three and has trained with Ballet Blake and Mankato Ballet Company. She has performed in NIU's Paquita, Fall Dance 2025  Spring Dance Concert 2025. Catherine thanks her friends and family for their unwavering support!

**Teresa Dingman (she/her)** is currently a sophomore B.F.A Dance Performance major at Northern Illinois University. So far, Teresa has performed in three faculty dance concerts, Art For Life, and Student Choreographer's Showcase during her time at NIU. She is so excited for the opportunity to keep performing and collaborating with such inspiring peers. This is her first time choreographing for Art For Life and she hopes you enjoy the show!



**Alice Duncan-Abushalback (she/her)** is now a senior at NIU, majoring in dance. She has studied at a couple different studios including Plainfield Dance Academy and Ballet 5:8, and studied at Marymount Manhattan College prior to her transfer to NIU. Aside from dance, Alice also carries skills in singing, acting, video editing, and music production. She hopes to one day secure a spot in a touring, contemporary/modern-centric dance company while continuing to fuel her passion for music on the side.

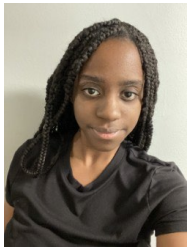
**Ivan Flores** is a senior B.F.A. dance major at NIU, freelance dancer and choreographer of Hispanic descent. In childhood, he started exploring art by participating in several school festivals and performances in Mexico City. At the age of 13, he moved to Illinois where he discovered his passion in self-taught choreography by creating dances for high school and quinceañera events. After attending his first dance-technique classes at College of Lake County, he decided to pursue dance as a full-time career. In 2013, he established LatinoXpressions (LTX) dance, the first Latin dance studio in the Round Lake area. LTX's focus is on Latin-inspired dance choreography for quinceañeras, weddings and community events. Ivan continues his dance passion by teaching Latin dance classes and workshops as well as choreographing for various events and dance concerts. He plans to use his studies at NIU to expand on his network and his artistic and pedagogic portfolio.



**Chloe Franklin** is a first-year B.F.A Dance Major at Northern Illinois University. Her journey started around age 10 at the Academy of Ballet Wauconda near her hometown in McHenry Illinois. Here, she trained in ballet, pointe, lyrical, and contemporary and competed with the elite competition team for two years. She was also a member of her high school varsity dance team for four years, participating in both competitive and sideline dancing. She enjoys both preforming dance and teaching dance at her home studio. Chloe looks forward to teaching after graduation and working towards owning her own studio one day!

**Chamayze Hall**, known as Maz, is a multidisciplinary artist and performer whose work blends technical precision with expressive movement. As a Dance and Art major with a Military Science minor, she brings both discipline and creativity to the stage. Maz proudly serves as President of Idol Club, where she leads performances that celebrate K-pop and contemporary dance culture. She is also a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc., and enjoys taking and teaching heels dance classes, using dance as a tool for empowerment and self-expression.

**Antonio Houston (he/him)** is a dance artist based in the Chicagoland area. He is currently completing his senior year getting his BFA in dance here at Northern Illinois University. Originally from Aurora Illinois, he has received dance training from Ballet Chicago, Von Heidecke, Next Generation Ballet, Madd Rhythms, Chicago Tap Theatre, and many local dance studios. His primary passion lies in tap dancing, but he also harbors a keen interest in exploring various conventional and unconventional dance styles. Once Antonio graduates, his next steps are with Chicago Tap Theater. There he will be a trainee dancer with the company and get the opportunity to take classes and perform. Additionally, Antonio is a photographer and videographer. His unique perspective on movement enables him to create captivating images and videos primarily within the dance scene. If you would like to check out his work, his Instagram is @Ant._.ography.

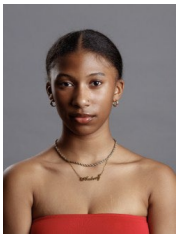


**Monet' Johnson** is a passionate dancer, and a second year B.F.A. Dance major at Northern Illinois University. She will be taking place in two outstanding pieces for Art For Life. Her creative focus blends exceptional technique with emotional and human connection . Monet' is passionate about performing arts and hopes to join a program or more in the future. She is more than thankful for the chance to dance with such fabulous dancers and performers, as well as a dedicated creative team to guide her. She thanks the faculty, her family, her friends, and most importantly, her cohort for their unwavering support.

**Ash Lehning**, a second year history major at NIU, has been dancing since the age of four, and has experience in several different styles, including ballet, lyrical, modern, jazz, hip hop, tap, and others. For her NIU Honors Capstone project, she created an eighty minute one-person show with instrumental and vocal performances, as well as several self-choreographed dance solos. Before university, Ash choreographed solos and group dances for her high school's plays and variety shows. She also danced the lead role in her studio's annual Harry Potter ballet twice, six years apart. Outside of dance, Ash has been involved in a long list of organizations, with two prominent ones being her high school's math team, where she competed twice at the state competition, and a number of orchestras, where she played violin, viola, cello, and double bass.

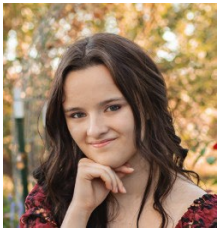
**Ava Martin** is a Senior Illustration Major with a Dance Minor She began her journey in Springfield, Illinois training for the dance competition stage from the age of 3. During this time, she became certified to teach Ballet, Tap, Jazz, and Acro through the Southern Association of Dance Masters. At university, she continued to refine her technical and choreographic skills. During this time, she has performed in 5 of the school's dance concerts, 5 of the student shows, and choreographed 4 works. During the summers she has trained at both Danceworks 360s and Hubbard Streets Summer Intensives and for her future, she hopes to pursue illustration alongside her career as a dance artist.

**Irismichelle Martinez-Garcia** (she/her) is a second year B.F.A Dance Performance major and NIU with plans to expand her journey as an artist with dance. Her dance performance credits include *Vamos : A Latino Heritage Month Concert, Concert Culture Sharing, Art for Life (Fall 2024), The Fall Dance Concert 2024, SCS (Spring 2025), The Spring Dance Concert 2025, For Colored Girls Who have considered suicide/ When the rainbow is enuf (Fall 2025), and the Fall 2025 Dance Concert* at NIU. She is beyond grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with very talented people. She hopes you enjoy the show!



**Aubrey McGee** is a third year transfer B.F.A dance major at Northern Illinois University having trained at Maywood Fine Arts, Stairway of the Stars, and College of Dupage. Aubrey is trained in many genres of dance including ballet, modern, jazz, and tap and is excited to continue to share her talents and love for the arts through dance, choreography, and performing. Some of her performance opportunities include Snow White, Cinderella, Le Corsaire, and more. Her experiences extend to choreographing for COD's Black History Month celebration as well as co choreographing for The Creative Circle's celebration of Juneteenth. Aubrey is very excited to be continuing her education at Northern and is grateful for the support from those around her.

**Dion** is a second year BFA dance major at NIU. During his first semester, he was an acting major but was drawn to the dance program and switched his major to dance second semester. He is a part of other dance clubs on campus and is very engaged in his community. This is Dion's first choreographed piece ever and he is very excited to showcase his powerful yet graceful peace for you all!



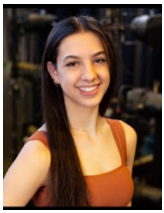
**Vivian** recently graduated after studying with the University of Iowa Youth Ballet School throughout high school. This summer she attended Cincinnati Ballet and Ballet Des Moines' Summer Intensives. She is currently a student with Northern Illinois University's Dance BFA program. She is always searching for new opportunities to get out of her comfort zone and continue to learn.

**Thomas Readling** (he/him) is a Junior Dance major and Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship minor at Northern Illinois University. Thomas started his dancing journey at the age of 8 with the Academy of Movement and Music where he got his Ballet, Graham, and Modern training. Since then, he's had the opportunity to perform for Salt Creek Ballet, VH Dance Center, and Dimensions Dance Academy. Thomas has also attended Chicago Dance Works Dancer's Tool-Kit intensive as well as Ruth Page Center's International Dance Experience. These opportunities, gigs, and experiences have shown him life as a professional dancer; a life he hopes to grow and thrive in for many years to come. This is his second time choreographing, and it has been fun to work with multiple dancers. Thomas would like to thank his parents for supporting him and his brother Michael for giving him the joy of dance. He is excited to put his experience to use at NIU and hopes you enjoy the show!

**Francesca Ryan** (She/Her) Is a Junior B.F.A Dance Performance Major at Northern Illinois University. She began dancing at the age of three years old. Growing up, she trained at Studio 83 Dance Academy. She trained in multiple genres of dance, Jazz and Modern being her favorite. During that time, she spent countless years in the competition circle earning many awards and scholarships for her dancing and performance abilities. Those years on the competition stages left her with a deep passion for performing. She was also fortunate to have had the opportunity to be a teacher's assistant during her high

school years at her childhood dance studio. Aside from competition, some of her favorite past performances she was a part of growing up, include The Nutcracker, Alice in Wonderland and Peter Pan. Francesca has also had opportunities to further herself as an artist by attending multiple different dance conventions and a wide range of classes with CLI Studios, and Visceral Dance Center where she continues to be inspired. Aside from her passion for dance she is also a Screen Actor and has spent numerous years training in tumbling. She would like to thank her family for their ongoing support. You can follow her on Instagram at francesca_ryan_official.

**Naija Sherwood** (she/her) is a second-year B.F.A. Dance Performance major at NIU. She began her training at the age of 3 as a competition dancer and has since trained with, but not limited to, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, Hyde Park School of Dance, ChicagoMulticultural Dance Center, and is an alumna of The Chicago High School for the Arts. Herperformance credits include The Fall Dance Concert (2024-2025), Art for Life (Fall 2024), The Spring Dance Concert (2025), SCS (Spring 2025), and “For Colored Girls” (Fall 2025) at NIU. She thanks her loved ones for their unwavering support and hopes you enjoy the show.



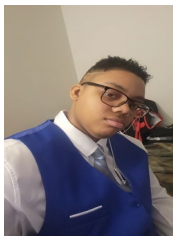
**Talia Sigismondi** is a Senior BFA dance major at NIU. Talia started dancing at the age of three at the Academy of Movement and Music in Oak Park, Illinois. Not long after, she joined Momenta Dance Company, where she had the opportunity to perform ballet, contemporary, and the modern techniques of Doris Humphrey and Martha Graham. In 2019, Talia traveled to Cuba, where she trained at the Pro Danza dance school and performed at Teatro Nacional De Cuba. She has participated in a summer intensive with Milwaukee Ballet and DanceWorks Chicago. In 2025, Talia had the opportunity to perform in the Dance For Life finale at the Auditorium Theater and with Momenta Dance Company at the Navy Pier Chicago Live performance. She also enjoys teaching ballet and sharing her love of dance with young students. She also had the opportunity to co-direct the student choreographic showcase and Art for Life at NIU in 2025. Talia is thankful for all the support from friends, family, and the NIU dance faculty. She is very excited to dance in the upcoming dance concerts.

**Sophia** is a freshman at Northern Illinois University. She is a Dance Performance major. She has been dancing since age 6. She has danced with Plainfield Dance Academy. This is her second dance concert with NIU. She has received a dance scholarship. She loves doing ballet because she has lots of fun doing it.

**Stephanie Tenorio Zavala** (she/her) is a senior B.F.A. illustration major and dance minor at NIU. She started dancing at the age of 10 at her home dance studio in Mexico, Union Varsity Dance Company, under the guidance of professors Jesús Zúñiga Pérez, and Alberto Zúñiga Pérez. At this studio she trained in the styles of hip hop, jazz, and Latin modern rhythms; and had multiple opportunities to perform at local events. Later she was part of the dance team at Westmont High School until she graduated in 2019, where she had the opportunity to choreograph and perform at school basketball and football games. Finally, this year she was able to perform at the Fall Dance Concert. Stephanie hopes to continue dancing after I graduation, and will love to become a dance teacher one day while also working on her illustration projects.

**Toby Thomas** is a Graduating senior at NIU & a (B.F.A.) Dance & B.S. Art major. He is originally from Normal Illinois, but he moved to Rockford Illinois in 2014, where he found his love for dance. Prior to attending NIU, Toby has been dancing as a Rockford dance company member from 2014 until 2018, where he trained under in ballet with Artistic Director Penna Browman. He also attended Rock Valley Collage, where he worked on receiving his associate in arts degree, before he transferred to NIU for his B.F.A. Toby has taught dance to elementary and middle school students in the after-school program where he worked with the Rockford Boys and girls club from 2017-2020. Toby has also performed in productions of The Nutcracker, danced as a Gargoyle in Snow White and danced the lead role of Nyame in Anansi and danced the lead role Prince Lemon in Cipollino with

the Rockford dance company. Toby danced in a production of Dracula as the lead role of Doctor Van Helsing and performed with Dimensions Dance Academy in DeKalb in their production of Coppelia as one of the princes. And has performed in Dance of the Decades, as the lead role of Michael Jackson in Thriller, Toby has danced in productions of Nutcracker, Spanish couples, Waltz of the flowers, Russian, Party Parent, also in Grease, Jocks, Hand Jive, You the One that I Want, Grease Lighting, even Sleeping Beauty with Beth flower Dance company in St. Charles Illinois Toby is also a three-time Performing Artist of the year nominee for 2023/2024/2025, also recently was nominated for Arts Educator of the Year award from the Rockford arts Council, for the first time After graduating from NIU with his B.F.A. and B.S. degree, Toby's dream is work with Disney world in Orlando FL or universal studios.



**Kai White** is a Senior B.F.A dance major at Northern Illinois University. He has been dancing since he was 3 years old. Kai has been in dance competitions and hip-hop groups growing up. When he graduates college, he will continue his career in dancing for himself, as well as other celebrities for music videos and going in different tours in the future, but he will also be working on his career in acting after he graduates as well. He is incredibly grateful to be dancing along with very talented people, who he knows will do amazing things in the future as well.

**Kendall Woodberry** is a senior dance performance major, a Chicago native, and a graduate of Walter Payton College Prep who has been studying dance since the age of five. Matriculating at the Ruth Page Center of Performing Arts, her training included classical ballet, modern, jazz, tap, and Afro-Cuban. Kendall has performed in many productions throughout her years in dance and is looking forward to being involved in more in her time at NIU. She hopes you enjoy watching!